

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is entitled the emergence of a tragic hero: a narrative analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This chapter presents the background of the study, the reasons for choosing the topic, the question raised in the study, the aim of the study, research method, research procedures, significance of the study, clarification of the key terms, and finally the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Tragedy is oftentimes associated with something terrifying or death. Related to this, Adrian Poole (2005: 1) states that the word 'tragedy' is used to cover dignity and value on violence, catastrophe, agony, and bereavement. Originally played in classical Greek dramas, tragedy becomes the main topic to entertain the audience. At that time, tragedy expresses the truth about the fall of a great man who looks good in the beginning but end up badly (Poole, 2005: 5). For instance, the story of Oedipus the King who falls into a tragedy after realizing that he has killed his biological father and married his biological mother. He then gouges his eyes out and begging for an exile from Thebes at the end of the story.

In such plays Poole (2005: 21) states that there is a room for magic or supernatural power to glide through everyday life. It dealt with exceptional figure. It

also supported by Aristotle (as translated by Butcher, 2000: 10) who believes that tragedy involves action of a renowned and of superior attainments figure.

Poole (2005: 6) further notifies that in the last couple of hundred years tragedy is conveyed in various ways though it has not lost its meaning. He (2005: 15 - 17) states that since eighteenth century tragedy had provided a familiar way of reading history, such as those which tell the rise and fall of political leaders or the fate of ambitious political movements, especially those aimed at radical or revolutionary change. In this context tragedy thoroughly realistic in which tells about the things that actually happened.

The idea of tragedy in historical context is also reflected in fiction. Among other is Chinua Achebe's *Things Falls Apart* which portrays the life of native Nigerian tribes that struggle to defend their cultural values and beliefs upon the arrival of Missionaries. Tragedy lies on the main character's life as he committed suicide at the end of the story.

However, Aristotle (as translated by Butcher, 2000: 10) states that the structure of tragedy might be differed from that of short stories which have a historical composition because it presents not a single action but a single period of time. Further, Aristotle (as cited by Poole, 2005: 16) states that history simply tells what actually happened while fiction tells what probably happened.

Because of the different structure, the present study discusses tragedy in fiction which specifically aims at analyzing the emergence of a tragic hero in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

In order to achieve fuller understanding of the concept of hero's figure in historical fiction, it is paramount to refer to the work of Bakhtin (2004) whose theorization of hero focuses more on the one appears in historical realism.

Bakhtin (2004: 10) draws a concept of time – space and the image of man in a novel of historical emergence. According to Bakhtin (2004: 24) the hero emerges along with the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world. Thus, the depictions of the image of man and the depictions of time and place become explicitly coordinated to the historical context.

In addition, Bakhtin (2004: 25) proposes that to see the connection of the man's emergence and the historical time, a specified method that is completed once and for all is the event. Rimmon – Kenan (1983: 2-3) defines events as something that happens and can be summed up by a verb or a name of action. Metz (1974: 17 as cited by Chandler, 2002: 90) argues that there are no 'events' in the world. It is narrative form which creates events. The basic form of event is a chain that corresponds to the beginning, middle and ending of the story. Thereby, to find the emergence of tragic hero in a historical context, the structure of events provides a sight to the development of both character and the historical time and space.

Choosing Achebe's novel entitled *Things Falls Apart* as the context of the research and utilizing Bakhtin (2004) theorization of historical hero's emergence, this present study discusses tragedy in fiction which specifically aims at analyzing the way a tragic hero is emerged in the novel.

1.2 Reason for choosing the topic

Tragedy is a common theme in literary works and mostly appeared in drama. As stated by Poole (2005: 15 - 17) that tragedy had provided a familiar way of reading history, such as those which tell the rise and fall of political leaders or the fate of ambitious political movements. Such topic is discussed by Dov Waxman (2001) on his journal which portrayed the tragic fate happened to Israel's former Prime Minister, Ehud Barak. He has suffered from a string of humiliating rejections, first from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, then from Israeli's electorate and finally from his own political party. Chinua Achebe's novel entitled *Things Fall Apart* (1958) presents tragedy in a fiction which set in a historical setting.

Many scholars have conducted studies on *Things Fall Apart* regarding on the issues raised in the novel. Among others is Jerica Linn Watts (2010) whose article discussed about the critical discourse surrounding narrative and linguistic strategies in Achebe's text. She read Achebe's novel as a work that repeatedly hints at modern society as one disrupted and transformed by contact with the European colonizer. Ibadurrohman (2010) also has conducted a postcolonial analysis study on *Things Fall*

Apart which investigated the way in which the Igbo people are oppressed and types of resistance that come from the oppressed.

Different from Waxman's journal (2001) which portrayed tragic hero in reality, the present study investigates the way the main character as a tragic hero in fiction. While Watts (2010) discussed narrative and linguistic strategies used by the author to deliver the story, the present study analyzes the structure of events that happened to the tragic hero in order to identify the way he is emerged. Guided by Bakhtin's theorization and utilizing textual analysis method, the study focus on the emergence of a tragic hero in a historical novel.

1.3 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research is conducted to answer:

1. How does tragic hero emerge in the novel as seen from Bakhtin's theorization of hero emergence in a historical novel?

1.4 The Aim of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the aims of the research is:

1. To investigate the way the main character as a tragic hero is emerged in the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

1.5 Research Method

1.5.1 Design

This study observed and analyzed a novel. It focuses on analyzing the way a tragic hero in *Things Fall Apart* is emerged as seen from Bakhtin's theorization of man emergence in a historical novel. The research method followed the qualitative approach in collecting, classifying, discussing and interpreting the subject. Qualitative approach is the analysis of research that tends to use the forms of words rather than numbers (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 21). In addition, Berg (2001: 3) mentions that textual analysis as one of the popular methods of observation in qualitative research. Related to this, Lockyer (as cited in *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Method*, 2008: 865) states that textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or the structure and discourse. Research on textual structure and discourse employs different methodologies; among others is the narrative analysis.

In addition, narrative analysis refers to a family of analytic methods for interpreting text that have in common a storied form (Riessman, as cited in *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Method*, 2008: 539). Further Riessman (2008: 539) states that the term *narrative* is illusive, it carries many meanings and used in a variety of ways by different scholars, often used synonymously with story. In the familiar everyday form, speaker/narrator connects events to a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings listener/reader is supposed to take

away from the story. Events are perceived as important, selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular listener/reader. Since novel has a storied form, a narrative analysis can be applied to the research.

1.5.2 Data Collection

The present study analyzes a novel entitled *Things Fall Apart* written by Chinua Achebe. It becomes the primary data of the research. The original version of the novel written in African language, later it is translated into English. The novel is published by Pinguin Group first in 1958. It contains of three parts and 197 pages. Taking place in Nigeria, this story portrays the life of native Nigerian tribes that struggle to defend their cultural values and beliefs upon the arrival of Missionaries. Okonkwo is the main character of the story that is presented as a wealthy, respected, and stands out as a great leader of the tribe. Unfortunately things began to change as Missionaries came to the village, creating conflicts and tensions among the people in the tribe. Okonkwo was drawn in despair as he could not protect his tribe from losing their cultural values and beliefs. Tragedy appears at the end of the story where Okonkwo committed suicide.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* introduced serious social and psychological analysis into Nigerian literature. It is set in the early days of colonization and tells the tragedy of a warrior hero who rigidly identifies with the values of traditional Ibo society. This novel won immediate international recognition. It also became the basis for a play by

Biyi Bandele. The production was put together in 1997 by the Performance Studio Workshop of Nigeria and was presented as part of the Kennedy Center's African Odyssey series in 1999.

Over the years, Achebe has received dozens of honorary doctorates and several international literary awards. He is an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and his work has been translated into more than 40 languages. In 1994, he fled to Europe from the repressive Nigerian regime, which threatened to jail him. However, he later returned to Nigeria to serve as president of the town union of his native village of Ogidi, honored as such because of his dedication to his ancestors' myths and legends. In early 1999, he was appointed as a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), which works for family planning and reproductive health around the world. (cited from: www.bookRags.com)

1.6 Research Procedures

In this study, the data are collected from the novel *Things Fall Apart* written by Chinua Achebe. The study is conducted through the following steps. The research is started by observing the source text; it is Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* that is, reading it thoroughly. The events that show the main character's emergence in the story are highlighted. This reading process also aims to find out the connection

between historical time and space and the hero's emergence. Every speeches, activities, or utterances of the character will be taken for a further analysis.

1.7 Significance of the study

The study aims to investigate the way the main character as a tragic hero is emerged in *Things Fall Apart*. The study utilizes Bakhtin's concept of hero and narrative theory to answer the research question. It is highly expected to enrich literary studies on narrative analysis of historical fiction especially for students of English Education Department of Indonesia University of Education.

1.8 Clarification of the Main Terms

Tragedy: An imitation of an action that excites the emotion of pity and fear. The action is constructed in plot presenting reversal of fortune and recognition that happened to the character (Aristotle as translated by Butcher, 2000: 10). Tragedy expresses the truth about the fall of great men who look good in the beginning but end up badly (Poole, 2005: 5).

Tragic Hero: A protagonist character who presents a good quality, that particular character presents as the one who is not ordinary but possesses an outstanding quality and greatness. Further, a tragic hero has generic conventions, in which the greatness is usually a kind of manly valor, imitate a real person, and be consistent. (Aristotle as translated by Butcher, 2000: 25)

Narrative Theory: A study of how narratives make meaning (Barry, 2002: 222), the term ‘narration’ suggests a communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee and the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message (Rimmon – Kenan, 1983: 2).

Narrative Analysis: An analytical method for interpreting text which has in common a storied form. Narrative analysts interrogate intention and language—how and why events are storied, not simply the content to which language refers. (Riessman as cited in *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Method*, 2008: 539).

1.9 Organization of the Study

The paper of the research will be organized into five chapters as follows:

1. Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter contains the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, the object of the study, research methodology, clarification of the key terms, and also the organization of the paper.

2. Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains literature review which provides information to investigate research problems.

3. Chapter III: Research Method and Data Presentation

This chapter contains the research method of the research, including the data collection and data presentation.

4. Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides the analysis of the data using theoretical framework.

5. Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions

This chapter contains the researcher interpretation of the research finding in a form of conclusion and suggestion.